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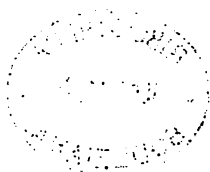
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' Things wherewith one may edify another.'—Rom. xiv. 19.

Fraternal Suggestions;

IN

FIVE LECTURES

GIVEN AT A CONFERENCE OF CLERGY IN HEREFORD.

BY THE

REV. JOHN RICHARDSON, M.A.

INCUMBENT OF CAMDEN CHURCH, CAMBERWELL.

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE following Addresses were delivered under circumstances of very happy fellowship among brethren who met for prayer and mutual help. The clergy came together calmly, prayerfully, expectingly; and they separated in closer bonds of happier acquaintance with each other, and with their Master. Many grand subjects opened out before them as they studied the inspired Word of God together; and they felt what a power there is in love, when honest hearts truthfully seek to find the mind of God in the sacred oracles which He has given. Each had some thought to contribute, warm and glowing as if fresh from the heavenly altar; and when all were massed together, it

was as if a breath from above fanned all in a brighter flame. No permanent record remains below of the thoughts and feelings that met and mingled then, and yet each man's memory has retained something which it would not easily let die.

But the addresses which could be printed seemed fitted to be remembrances of a very happy and holy season, and so they are offered to the brethren assembled, as a link to bind all together. And if, in the good providence of God, they should reach the souls of other men,—not as through ear and eye, but by ear only,—may He who in every case is the sole illuminator have the greater praise.

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Fraternal Suggestions.

I.

VENERATION.

‘HE that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory ; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true.’ This is one of the precious sayings of Christ which Christian men, and Christian ministers especially, are ever to keep in mind. It puts men in their right places, and shows what the business of a life and a ministry is or ought to be. It helps us to get away from the littlenesses and the illiberalties, the jealousies and unbelief, of work, and to

rise to the grander, larger, truer idea, that 'One is our Master, even Christ; and all we are brethren.' I have, therefore, chosen a subject for our meditation which brings out our duty as before God. It is the subject of

VENERATION,

what seems to have been in the Apostle's mind when he said, 'Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.' The great want of our age is reverence. The great test concerning our teaching is, whether men grow flippantly familiar or solemnly devout, confiding yet not confident, holy and yet humble men of God.

It is gloriously true that 'perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment;' and God invites His children to be happy before Him. But it is glaringly untrue, that love also casteth out consideration of the distance between creature and *Creator, of the honour due to His holy*

Name from the servants of Him who is 'over all, God blessed for ever.'

I. In respect of our own soul's worship, we must fill our minds with higher conceptions of the Divine Majesty.

II. In regard to the people's worship, we must fill our testimony with fuller instruction as to the Divine claims and demands upon all who wait before Him.

I. There is too often a service which is without thought. There is hurry and excitement even to an obtruding itself into the sanctities and solemnities of His Heavenly Presence-chamber. So comes the obvious necessity for quiet, and calm, and well-regulated meditation concerning the things we have in hand. Nothing can make amends for the want of closet communion, and direct Holy Ghost illumination, and distinct Bible revelations. A man may float away on the buoyancy of his own

conceptions as to what God ought to be, or he may be carried away by the tide of this world's opinion as to what God must be, and all will become unstable, unpractical, unspiritual as to any real and true comprehension about the glories and the mysteries of what God is, and has revealed Himself to be. Veneration is not a product from admiration of the human, but a result from an acknowledgment of the divine. Its language will be, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'

The realization of all this must beget a holy solemnity in us who minister in holy things. Not that the Christian minister is to become morose, or gloomy, or without sympathy for his fellow-men in sorrows or in joys. There is a chastened gravity which well befits a man who represents the Saviour in the midst of careless sinners, and who is God's remembrancer in keeping awake the *thoughts and hearts* over which worldliness

comes as an opiate or a stimulant to put out the thought of God. We ought to go before men as having come straight from the presence of God. Men 'ought to take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.' The world seeks to obtrude itself upon the Church; and the Church must set itself to make an impression upon the world.

In our social intercourse, therefore, let us determine, by God's grace, to be self-restrained. A worldly clergyman may be flattered, but he will not be followed. The man who is bold for Christ, the man who is honest with men, the man who is true to himself and faithful to his high calling in Christ Jesus, will win his way quietly, but surely, to the respect, and the confidence, and affection of many, who may at first think him too narrow, or too strict, or too serious for social intercourse. But earnestness will soon explain and recommend itself; and he

who has so much veneration for man that he cannot forget his immortality, he who has so much veneration for truth that he dares not make compromise with error, he who has so much veneration for God that he cannot leave Him out in any work to be done below, will find that men appreciate, understand, approve, and accept, his faithful service.

Veneration forbids any unworthy levity about God's name, God's word, God's honour, God's plan of salvation. It solemnizes thought and sanctifies desire and throws the habit of a gracious seriousness over the character and the life. It suggests to the most careless that they must not take a liberty with such a man of God. It hints to the soul most anxious, most desolate, most out of patience with the world, that here is a man grave enough, wise enough, true enough, to be made a confidant, and so to become a friend.

In our ministerial functions it is more needful still that reverence, reality, veneration, shall appear. There is a tendency to routine in the mere fact that we repeat familiar words, and that formularies may generate formality if there be not special watchfulness and prayer. But everything is of consequence in such an office as ours. Down to the very minute detail of not making preparation for a following petition, whilst we are engaged in putting up a former one—and all through the particulars of voice and attitude and manner, we must act so that we ourselves may be known to be personally communing with God ; our worship is to be ‘that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.’ The sacredness of the occasion should subdue us all into a humble earnestness of desire to approach the throne of grace, ‘with reverence and godly fear.’ Everything should be ar-

ranged with special consideration of this practical effect. Preparation of the heart before, and keeping of the heart all throughout our ministration, are to us, more than even to others, absolutely essential to a right discharge of our higher functions of leading our congregations to 'worship the Father in spirit and in truth.' There may be ecstatic excitement which is unreasonable and unreal; and there may be hysterical devotion that comes out of an overwrought fanaticism which is not of faith. But our sober and solemn services have a dignity about them which the closest examination of the wisest thoughts will prove to be according to high spirituality and practical good sense. We need not go beyond the opportunities of our office; but up to the very furthest limits of every petition and ceremonial and sacrament, we shall do well to take heed that all shall be throbbing with life, thrilling with emotion, tremulous

with faith and love. So, 'if there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.) The great fact which wins our people to us, is that we have ourselves first been won to Christ. And to magnify our office, exalt our ministry, elevate our worship, and bring comfort in our work, I know nothing that has so immediate, so uniform, so marvellous an effect, as our own veneration, the evidence, without strain and without hypocrisy, that we are bowing in heart, in conscience, in will, in adoration, before the felt presence of Him whom we recognise as 'King of kings and Lord of lords.'

I pass now to the second division of *my subject*.

II. In regard to the people's worship, we must testify fully and clearly as to the Divine demands and claims. There is a kind of teaching which exalts the hearers. When a man flatters the pride of human intellect by referring to the judgment of the creature the great facts and truths which rest really upon the authority and revelation of the Creator ; or when a man avoids the subjects which give offence, and so practically consults the pleasure more than the salvation of his people ; in all this sad unfaithfulness will appear. All such teaching is barren. It comes with no power into men's minds ; and the very men who like to hear it suspect it all the while to be something that conscience does not endorse and the anxious sinner cannot accept.

And there is a kind of teaching which exalts the preacher, as when a man shows his learning, his taste, his ingenuity, *pathos, or power, or eloquence, or as*

ment, in handling the great subjects which stand on their own inherent truth and deep significancy for man. All such teaching will disappoint ; for human favour is versatile, and the principle of faith is forgotten, for 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only ?' (John, v. 44.) Men are not converted by human argument, but by the grace of God ; and whatever be the garnishing, the food of the soul is the bread which cometh down from Heaven. You may gather a crowd by human arts, but you will not build up the Church of Christ, except by the exhibition and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a teaching which exalts the external appliances of worship to the depreciation of its inner grace and power. Men may multiply services, and cultivate music, and carefully arrange ceremonials,


and all these things are useful and valuable in their place ; but who here has not groaned in his very soul over the want of life, and heart, and devotion, when multitudes have been joining only in the externals of prayer and praise ?

The teaching which the times require which the Lord Jesus Christ expect which the Holy Ghost will bless, which every true minister of the Gospel is to glory in and pray over, is the teaching which 'gives unto the Lord the honour due unto His name.' You must put the Lord upon His throne, and then your people will be found prostrate at His footstool. Suffer me to particularise some of the subjects out of which veneration springs.

Foremost is—

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY.

There seems to be a tendency to put law *above the Lawgiver*—to set up Nature



if she concealed God, and to deify humanity, as if the good of the many, and not the good pleasure of the One, determined what ought to be. But man needs to be guided, waits to be governed ; and in all the higher concerns of his inner nature and enduring history he is glad to be taught, because he has a strong suspicion that an authority higher than himself must settle these things. ‘ Who art thou that repliest against God ? ’ may sound hard at first ; but as the mind grows familiar with it, it is confessed to be only the logical deduction from this great fact, ‘ He doeth according to His will in the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and none can stay His hand, and say, What doest Thou ? ’ Sovereignty must be somewhere ; and the faithful teacher must press the subject nearer and nearer, till it rests where only it can rest, in the infinite wisdom, and supreme authority, and sole

jurisdiction of God Himself. 'His good pleasure' is the fountain out of which all must flow ; 'to the praise of His glory' is the vanishing point towards which all the lines of Divine revelation and human anticipation must converge. And so, as we stand aside and remain below, the thoughts and hearts which we have guided must remain fully in the sunlight, and freely in the grace which cometh down from Heaven. Agencies, administrations, appliances of every sort, must, on system, be kept subordinate, and the Lord alone must be exalted in this our day.

A second great subject ever to be kept before the people is—

GOD'S GREAT LOVE.

There is some danger of Unitarian mis-teaching upon each person of the ever-blessed Trinity. As when the main of religion rests upon some inner experience

supposed to be from the Holy Ghost, and under the secret testimony of this kind the work of the Father and of the Son may be ignored ; or when the Fatherhood of God is separated as the chief idea, and because it may be gathered from His works and His ways, therefore His inspired Word and His incarnate Word have less consideration. So, when the love of Christ is looked at as a thing apart, the need of the Spirit, and the mercifulness of the Father, are dimmed and distorted before men. True veneration comes out of the sweet surprise with which the sinner discovers that after all his prodigal wanderings His Father's heart is open to his return. A forced reconciliation, wrought out by the suffering of the Saviour, and so claimed from the sterner justice of our God, never will draw out those deeper emotions of admiration, adoration, affection, which come up when the everlasting love of our Heavenly

Father is seen in the gift of His Son, and in the devising of His grace for our salvation. Put the majesty as high as your thought and language can place it ; but see that the mercy surrounds the majesty ; take care that the rainbow is ever round about the throne ; remember, 'The four-and-twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created.' Nothing must hinder or curtail our free utterance about the love of our God and Father—no theological dogmas, no chilling disappointments in our evangelistic work, no inferences, suggested or self-derived, from the seeming barrenness in lands sown or not sown with the Gospel seed. 'God is love' must be written


over our ministry. 'The love of God' must be put forward as the constraining principle out of which we act and speak. Brightly, boldly, heartily, let us continue to declare, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son ; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Oh, for a child-like veneration for the wisdom, and the goodness, and the love of a covenant God and Father in Christ !

Lastly, I would urge special attention to a third topic—

GOD'S RIGHTFUL RULE.

Doctrines are essential—emotions are natural ; but the outcome of both, if the one or other be healthy, must be an obedient, and a consecrated, and a sanctified life. 'Love is the fulfilling of the law'—not the enacting of it, not the sit-

ting in judgment upon it, but the accepting the law at the Ruler's hand, and the fulfilling of it in the Ruler's presence. Much as the age needs the Gospel, we are never to ignore the law. Legalism is a blunder; illegalism is a blot. Works without faith are dead works; but 'faith without works is dead also.' And love that will not obey is a spurious thing—only a passion, and not a perfection—hollow and false—an insult and an injury done with a treacherous look and a glozing tongue. The servants of Christ are not to be judges among the people. They are not to sit and listen to all that proceeds out of the evil heart of man. They are not to come down to the wranglings and disputings of the world, where men 'call evil good, and good evil.' But they are to stand above all the people, and proclaim over all the strife of tongues what God has *laid down* as the guiding principles and



absolute duties of human life. They must always, everywhere, prove out of the Word of God that sin is wrong, however profitable, however popular, however palatable—wrong, radically, undeniably wrong. They must insist before all that sin must not only be confessed and deplored, but departed from. They must declare, that in every circumstance, under all conditions, the way of obedience must be trodden and kept, even to the very end of our probationary human life. Sinners must be prostrate before the Cross, condemned because the law has been broken by them, justified before it has been fulfilled for them. And saints must be erect under the Gospel banner, fighting the good fight, following the Holy Saviour, walking in the way of God's commandments, under the grace and towards the glory.

If there be one thing more than another that pains the faithful minister, and ~~dis~~

honours the Church of Christ, it is the low moral tone, and the unsatisfactory life and conversation, of many who make profession. It is sad to look over a modern congregation, and feel how worldliness, unreality, unspirituality, stand out in so sad relief.


Beautiful prayers said in an apparent unconcern ; the precious Gospel truths heard with a foregone conclusion that they are not to be accepted if not according to the ideas of a particular school or party ; thrilling services of song, which the few proudly render and the many critically discuss ; all the stateliness of ceremonial accurately cared for, while the outer world makes note of the broad contrast between the church life and the home life or the business life of many who take prominent part—all such things bring a gloom over the heart and give a pang to the conscience of many a good man who sighs for *higher and holier things*.

And I take it to be a precious opportunity for us all to be open and communicative with one another in this very serious crisis of our Church and Nation. The thing that will check the luxuriousness and self-indulgence of our day—that will deal an effectual blow at the evil and rank growth of infidelity and irreligion amongst the multitudes that live without God, is Veneration—a holy reverence and a humble prayerfulness on the part of all who know and love the Lord. The reform, I am persuaded, must begin at the house of God—must begin with ourselves as ambassadors for Christ. There is a great temptation to us in the very energies and activities of our modern church life. We live too much before the world, too much in the heat and hurry of public undertakings. Our fathers were men who had more time and more desire for the persistent and thorough study of the oracles of God. They made

in private, on their knees, a fuller preparation for their pulpit utterances ; and so it is that we look rather to the older than to the new literature for those masterpieces of faithful preaching and those deep drawings of cool, pure water from the hidden wells of truth to which so many used to come from far, because they were refreshing to the soul.

The future, under God, is in our own hands. Even a small company, conspicuously bearing a banner on which this one word, 'Veneration,' was inscribed, would rally a large host and effect a wonderful change by God's blessing.

So I would lay this matter on all our hearts, that we may all lay it this night before the Lord—What can I do? how must I teach, that there may be in my own life, in the presence of God and of my own people—that there may *be, amongst my own people, in the pres-*



ence of the world and of the Church,
and the Lord and Master of us all, a
deeper, a holier, a humbler, and a more
conspicuous

VENERATION ?

II.

CONSECRATION.

‘Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve God for the promoting of His glory and the edifying of His people?’

Such was the solemn inquiry made of us all in that well-remembered day when we first consecrated ourselves to the work of the ministry in the Church of God. Probably it was with a quiver upon the lip and a thump at the heart, that we all said, ‘I trust so’ to that appeal. And now that years have sobered us all, and weakened *many of us*, I am anxious to revive and

deepen the feeling in which we gave ourselves to God that day. So this subject of

CONSECRATION

may fitly fill our minds as we think how it is, and why it is, that we are employed of God in the great work which is so near His heart and so intimately connected with His glory.

We have an ecclesiastical relation to the particular Church in which we are called to minister; and we must be honestly, sincerely, conscientiously, affectionately true to that. The order and discipline, the doctrines and formularies, the purposes and plans of our own beloved Church of England, should have a manly and whole-hearted maintenance and defence from honourable and high-minded Christian men.

And we have a ministerial relation to the particular charge and people that, in

the Providence of God have been committed to our care ; and our prayers, our thoughts, our sympathies, our labours must specially go out towards that.

We have also a fraternal and spiritual relation to the universal Church of Christ ; and our widest charities, and our deepest harmonies, and our noblest hopes, must flow out toward 'all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.' (1 Cor. i. 2.)

But the special matter to which our thoughts are to turn now, is the relation we bear as Christian men and Christian ministers to 'Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled us, for that he counted us faithful, putting us into the ministry.' (1 Tim. i. 12.)

Often as we have all felt the need of the Spirit's teaching, we may well all seek it now ; for if He should come down into the midst of us, to open our eyes and touch *our hearts* and raise our ideas of the work

and service for which we have been set apart, not only will our own souls profit, but the influence will be felt in the congregations and in the Church at large. And if 'an unction from the Holy One' makes us able ministers, and 'power from on high' makes us effectual pleaders with God for man, and with man for God, we shall return to our homes and to our work and say, 'It was good for us to be here.'

What are we to understand by consecration?

It means the action of the Holy Ghost; for much as a man may and will and must consecrate himself to the Lord, yet the initial transaction is, 'the Holy Ghost has made you overseers.' And this fact must be realised in all its force and meaning. This is the dispensation of the Spirit. 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. But all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man

severally as he will.' The place of our ministry is from Him ; as when ' the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.' The power of our ministry is from Him ; because we are yet within the economy of which it was said, ' Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses.' (Acts, i. 8.) The message of our ministry is from Him ; according as our brother Paul has said, ' Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.' (1 Cor. xi. 13.)

This is a glorious fact for a man to realise. Called by grace, qualified by grace, comforted by grace, directed by grace, seconded by grace, a man feels himself to be identified with that which cannot fail, and so he is never ashamed.

But it means also the entire dedication

of the whole man for the whole life; to that special work for which the Lord in His love has designed him.

We know when a man loves scientific or literary pursuits, when he has musical or artistic tastes, when he has given himself to politics, or trade, or professional life. He gives us to understand in what direction his interests and his engagements and his enjoyments lie. It must be still more conspicuous in the Christian man and the Christian minister, 'whose he is and whom he serves.' We must never be afraid of being professional. We must never conceal, or suffer our people to forget, our clerical character. The ambassador for Christ has the whole listening and observing world for the sphere of his testimony; and he must be ready to speak everywhere for his Master. 'We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard,' is the key-note in the life.

witness of all who have truly caught the grand inspiration of Gospel grace and duty.

One great feature is to be consecration to Christ. The highest title for our office is, 'Minister of Christ.' We are, or ought to be, enthusiasts about our Master. We have felt His grace and rejoiced in His great salvation. We understand His sympathy and walk under the consciousness of His favour and His care. We are assured of the justice of His cause, the rightfulness of His rule, and the honour and happiness of His kingdom. We look for His coming, longing to see His glory, pointing to the reality of His appearing, hasting unto the day of His espousals, as knowing that the Bridegroom has not forgotten His Bride. The office we fill is honourable and happy, and we would not exchange it even for works that angels do. The work we are called to do is so unique, so mysteriously connected *with our body* and our sojourn upon earth,

that we may well say, 'To me to live is Christ.'

Another feature is consecration to the truth as it is in Jesus. We are in very high and holy sense, 'ministers of the New Testament,' 'ministers of the Word.' We are not inventors of our message, but called to deliver it in all its original truth and force and fulness. We are men who have made up their minds, who are committed to a creed, who have been persuaded, and so are determined to persuade. 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.' 'We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.' No real work will ever be done by half-hearted men. No heavy blows will be dealt by a man who does not quite know where to strike and with what. 'The weapons of our war

fare are mighty through God,' and we must wield them with a will, believing that God's grace will bring success. The minister of the Gospel must not crouch for a hearing. He takes his stand upon the authority of God, and proclaims the word of the Lord, whether men will hear or not. In this connexion it is very needful to conserve the honour and the dignity of the preacher's office. He is not to please itching ears. He is not to watch and yield to the current of human thought and opinion. He is not to apologise for obtruding his doctrine or his exhortation on unwilling or uncongenial hearers. Around him are living men for whose souls he is requested to care. Above him is his gracious Master, in whose Name he is expected to speak. And before him is a solemn day of reckoning, in which he will be called to give an account of his stewardship and reckon for the talents *committed to his charge.*

A further thought is that there must be consecration to the work. We belong to a system that is to turn this world upside down—a regenerating system, an aggressive system, one that holds a truth before which all errors are required to bow. It is not ease that can satisfy us. When we have achieved a victory by God's word and grace, we are not to pile our arms and prepare our camping ground. There are more strongholds to be stormed, because there are souls still languishing and our Lord is dishonoured still. It is a missionary work everywhere; for even when the Gospel is acknowledged in the understanding, it is to be pressed home upon the conscience and the life. Our whole thought is to be upon our work. In the closet we lay it before our Lord—in our very leisure we gather illustrations, examples, experiences, as to how we may best begin it afresh. *If not fishing, we shall be mending our nets.*

We are to bend our studies all one way, to the one great purpose ; and we are citizens, students, Christians, only that we may be more humble, more hearty, more influential, more consistent, 'for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.'

We are not responsible for success ; but we are for effort. We may very seldom reap ; nevertheless, we are to be always sowing. We are not sure where the arrow falls ; but we are to see to it that all that are in our quiver shall have been discharged from the bow of our strength, before our bow-string is untied.

There are certain conditions about consecration which are also to be kept in mind. Ours is a holy calling. 'As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.' (1 Pet. *i. 15, 16.*) It may not be that great ability

has been given to us, and our power to sway human opinion may be but small; but there is a great principle of the Old Testament system which has still force in our New Testament privileges, 'Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.' (Isa. lii. 11.) Men appreciate consistency. They reverence the servants who are known to represent the Master in character as well as in authority; and when they are uninfluenced for good by the language of the lip, they may be overcome, convinced, and brought over by the logic of the life. I trust that the grand result of our coming together may be a more conspicuous consecration of our own souls and lives. The Holy Ghost will come in as the door of our hearts is thrown wide open for the entrance of the Lord Jesus and His Word; then with our bodies as His holy temple, and our hearts as His light-bearers, we shall be conspicuous for all that is so lovely in the

Christian character, a holy, subdued, conscientious dedication of our whole being to God's glory. The Lord grant that.

Another condition is earnestness. We must be careful not to fall into the condition of flattering ourselves that we do our duty, and find fault with the people in our charge because they will not respond to our appeal. St. Jude has given the true idea of earnestness when he speaks of 'pulling them out of the fire.' And our hearts should be heavy, yet all on flame, in the sight of so many immortal beings in darkness and in danger. St. Paul is a noble instance as to what the love of souls can make a man to be. And our own dear Lord and Master has told what was 'His meat and drink,' when He was about His Father's business. We ought frequently to meditate upon the value of a man, when Christ 'gave Himself' for such. We shall *do well to think* of the necessity of a

sinner when Jesus adds, 'to redeem us from all iniquity.' We may find much to encourage us as to the capability of a believer, as we search out the meaning of 'a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Just as we are reminded of the prospect of a saint, when we read 'of that blessed life, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

We have all, in fact, much to learn about the scope and high purposes of our ministerial office. And the heart must be hot within us before in any adequate manner we shall speak with our tongues, and strive with the whole force of our entire character in this great cause, to which God has called us and we have devoted ourselves.

There are some circumstances connected with our position as the recognised clergy of a National Church which in all wisdom and prudence it is good to take into account. We have great reason to thank

put stiffness into life and action. Yet we may gain by some more prescribed order; and the reading of God's Word, as well as the full completion of a well-sustained devotion, may be helped by a daily method prescribed and practised by us all.

So, again, in the matter of faithful teaching. We have in our own Articles, and Creeds, and Homilies, as well as in the standard divinity of our own Church, materials out of which we may wisely draw what will give variety, and accuracy, and width, and depth to our instructions, which we found on the Word of God. We are occasionally liable to settle down amongst a few truths; and the whole counsel of God is to be made known.

A periodical reading of our scriptural Articles would give a ring of evangelical truth which our teaching would be better for. It would take us into odd corners

time to time in our own heart of hearts the covenant we so solemnly entered into before God and His Church when we were ordained.

I venture very humbly to indicate how, in the carrying out of our own plans as the clergy of our National Church, we may help one another and benefit ourselves in the direction which our thoughts have taken.

To maintain a personal devotion, I mention the rule laid down for the daily private or public use of our own Prayer-book Service. The public use, in many cases, may be only a formal act, which our people may think to savour of formality, and we ourselves may find to hinder other work. But it may be well to have this private rule for settled and united communion with God. The mere repetition of prayers is not true supplication, and the hard following of rule may

Be a diligent shepherd, be a decided teacher, be an honest steward, be a faithful friend, be a humble worshipper. So you will in some measure feel what the apostle meant to recommend when he said, 'Make full proof of thy ministry.'

But none of these things, nor all of them together, will make up the whole idea of a real consecration. That goes before God with all a man's desires, efforts, exhortations, prayers, performances, and it says of them all, 'Not unto us, not unto us, but to Thy name give the praise.'

Low at the feet of Jesus the holiest servant loves to lie. Loud in the praise. Jesus the most persuasive tongue is glad to sing; and up to the throne of Jesus the most honoured minister delights to point. For ministries are but scaffoldings round a building which the Saviour is erecting here. *And when the grain is to be gathered in*

the garner, the Paul who planted, and the apostle who watered, with all the unknown but not forgotten accessories of the ploughmen and the reapers, will gather 'round the great heap of the winnowed grain, and say, 'What hath God wrought!'

Many things there are in our ministry to make us often sad. More things are met with to keep us very solemn and very sincere. But it is after all a grand conception that men are 'workers together with God;' and in the great day, when the work has all been done by God's great grace, yet through our poor human agency—when the work shall all be seen, in the grandeur of its large proportions, in the mystery of its indestructible results, and in the mercy of its glorious accomplishment; when the Church of the Redeemer shall sing its festal anthem of grateful joy, then the thing about which we shall *never be ashamed, and for which we shall*

continually thank our God, will be that this noble ministry we received from Lord, and we returned to the Lord whole-hearted, and all unstinted

CONSECRATION.

III.

SALVATION.

‘THAT I might by all means save some.’ (1 Cor. ix. 22.) Thus does the great Apostle Paul interpret the heart, and indicate the scope, of the ‘good steward of the manifold grace of God.’ And this opens out a deeply interesting subject as to what our main work means. The business of our life is to be ‘Salvation’—the very business of our gracious Master Himself, who ‘came to seek and to save that which was lost.’ The foolish sinner may say there is not much to fear, and the fierce enemy may insist that there is not much to hope; but we stand out firmly and faithfully in the

name of Christ and in the interest of man, and proclaim everywhere and to every man, 'He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.' How best to understand our position, how truly to fulfil our mission, may come out on a prayerful examination of the matter I would submit to your attention under this head, 'Salvation.'

One thing must be carefully attended to, that we begin at the beginning. Mischief often commences here. If men are not lost, they will not seek, and we shall not offer salvation. Therefore we need to have clear ideas and strong convictions about sin. Think of it only as an amiable weakness, an educational misfortune, a mental or moral defect, an excusable mistake, and you will have little horror of it, little concern about it. Give it only the character of a crime, breach of human law, injury to self or some other creature, and

you misname it, and misunderstand it altogether. The deflection from right is determined by the upright standard of God's law, not by the varying measurements of man's ideas and will. Into the secrets of the conscience, and amongst the idols of the heart, and up and down through the facts and the records of the life, the light of God's own commandments must enter. As they pronounce the condition to be, so the condition is ; and concealments, subterfuges, qualifications, excuses, escapes, must be unsparingly, unhesitatingly condemned. 'Very far gone,' (as far as possible gone) 'from original righteousness,'— 'all gone out of the way,'— 'altogether become abominable,'—the true diagnosis of the sinner's case must be understood, if we are to apply the right treatment which the case requires. 'Condemned already'— while 'the wrath of God abideth on him'— establishes this great fact. It is a man's


salvation that has to be proved ; not the danger, but the deliverance which is to be established and brought home. Under the requirements of civilized life, below the fair outside of what the world calls beautiful in character and condition of living, the eye of a holy God sees spiritual death—heart rebellion, soul corruption, absolute unfitness either to enter or to enjoy heaven. Aim at the conscience, bring the hammer of the Word to bear upon the ‘potsherds of the earth,’—show guilty man his danger and his defilement, so that no refuge of lies shall deceive him any more.

Built upon the sand, and buried when the floods beat upon it—wood, hay, stubble, fair till the fire begins—from these things many a disappointment has come to the minister who has not bottomed the sinner’s condition, has not begun his work of building only when the solid rock has *been cleared*. Let us insist more upon

danger—point more to the peril of unconverted men—protest more against transgression of any part and every part of God's law—bind up no unclean wounds—write out no unpaid debts—cover up no filthy rags. We are rather to be as clear as the day, honest as the sun, pure as the truth, and outspoken as the love of God. There is no mercy in passing over the commands of God—no wisdom in ignoring the comments of God. Plain language about evil, full statements about judgment, direct charging of ungodliness upon the ungodly—this is what our times require, and what the responsibility of our office must impose. Repentance is to be insisted upon, and explained in all its solemn details. Law must be magnified, while gospel is to be unfolded and offered. Men must be dealt with as they are, and as they know themselves to be; and from the very beginning, we must approve our-

selves as true men who must search out and speak out all the truth. Our office is to rouse, and startle, and convince; and the echo to our appeal which tells how our words have taken effect, should be, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' 'What must I do to be saved?' If sinners continue to be comfortable, and worldly men have no provocation to find fault; there is some defect, some unfaithfulness, something like want of courage, and point, and power in our denunciation of sin, and in our vindication of God's law. Let us see to it, that we begin at the beginning, and make the sinner understand his peril because of sin.

But we must also carry the matter of deliverance to its full end and development also. We should be cruel indeed, were we to stop at condemnation, when it is salvation we have to offer. The anxious sinner *must be guided* to Christ—taught that



salvation is the beginning of Christian life—that eternal life does not begin at death—that the soul in Christ is secure, as Noah in the ark or the man-slayer in the city of refuge. The personal Saviour, laid hold of by the individual faith, becomes the present Saviour, and He tells that we are, not only are to be, ‘accepted in the Beloved.’ The free grace offers the full gospel, and out of that comes the fresh life, and the fervent love. The wise teacher insists upon this great salvation—presses men to accept it, and cannot leave the sheep that was lost and has been found, till, like his Master, he has laid it on his shoulders rejoicing, and carried it home into the fold. Our importunity must be about decision—about crossing the boundary line—about breaking off from Satan and closing with Christ. So it is that conversions must be the coveted things—that the result aimed at, prayed for, perseveringly pressed upon all who hear us, is

acceptance, enjoyment, realization ; that men are saved, rescued, justified, forgiven, so soon as they have with the heart really repented and actually trusted in the merits, the cleansing blood and the covering righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The ministry that hangs salvation in a balance, as something fallen to or fallen from the sinner, as he may be found when life is ended, must always be a comfortless, barren, and distressing thing. Men need to have the load of guilt, the agony of conscience, the tyranny of sin removed, and a full Christ, with His free gift of an entire acquittal, is the only subject which brings glad tidings of great joy.

But if this is our work, what is our weapon ? We may argue with the sinner, and fail. We may talk about the misery of the lost and the glory of the restored, and fail. We may insist upon the fitness *of things*, and show that holiness and

happiness are twins ; and yet we may fail to convince the understanding, influence the heart, or change the life. ' We preach Christ crucified ' is the better determination of wiser men. It is not so much the salvation as the Saviour that we are to present. And it is not even the Saviour only in the beauty of His human life, or in the majesty of His Divine existence (though both these features will appear in all full teaching), but it is the Saviour as the Substitute and the Sacrifice, the Great Sufferer even unto death for sin—it is the Christ crucified whom we are to keep ever before the minds of men. It is His redeeming love which gives its magnetic power to the Son of man lifted up, either in the Passion or in the preaching of the Cross. The curative property in the cup of salvation is from the bitter ingredients which the Saviour tasted for sin, and the atonement is the very essence of the

spiritual food on which faith must feed and grow. There will be no leverage, if our fulcrum be not the finished work of Christ. And what is the authority on which our teaching, even about the Crucified, must rest? Not some system of our own—fine-drawn inferences, or fanciful picturings, which our own pride of heart and intellect may bid us invent and preach. No; we must state the truths of God in the very words of God. ‘The gospel of Christ’ is ‘the power of God.’ ‘The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.’ ‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.’

Therefore, ‘preach the word.’

Now to preach the word is to study it, *to have our own mind in harmony with it.*

The mere critical knowledge of it is not enough ; the common intellectual acknowledgment of it is not enough ; the perfunctory quotation of it is not enough. Few things so deaden a ministry as the heartless and thoughtless stringing together of texts—the uninteresting repetition of familiar passages, which run over the lip, and seem to betoken no mental or moral vigour. The Bible is a sacred book, to be very solemnly handled, very seriously appealed to, very lovingly examined, accepted, and obeyed. The wise teacher holds it to be true, but he knows it to be alive ; he feels it to be right, and he uses it as ‘the power of God unto salvation.’ Before the preached word is the craftiness of the devil, and the deceitfulness and hardness of the sinner’s heart ; but in the Word, with the Word, behind the Word, through the power of the Holy Ghost, are the might and the mercifulness of Him who has said,

‘My word shall not return unto me void.’ Make it plain, keep it prominent, have it pure : so will God’s Word be your warrant and your weapon in all you say ; and when you can speak no longer, some holy word, lodged in some opened mind, may tell after you are forgotten that ‘your labour was not in vain in the Lord.’

But the worker, after all, is not man, but God. Even the Word ‘is mighty through God.’ ‘Not I, but the grace of God which was with me,’ as it explained an apostle’s success, so it consoles even the humblest labourer for the Lord. Silently, as in the presence of a heavenly visitant—humbly, because his own heart tells how feeble his best efforts have been—the minister of Gospel looks at the great results, and he says, ‘What hath God wrought !’ And three great thoughts dominate every other idea as to the secret *of all that has been done in saving work*

upon sinners' souls : ' His good pleasure ;'
' His great love ;' ' His mighty power.'

But what of the gathered flock ? what of the quarried stones ? what of the ransomed captives ? The ninety and nine are safe, and the Shepherd has gone out for the lost lamb ; but what of the saved souls ? They are to be also fed ; and the Shepherd's heart is on this work also. The glorious temple has not yet been put together, but one day it will represent the Lord's own great idea of what the house of God is to be. But the stones must be chiselled, and the timbers carved, and each has a pattern which fits his place in the structure, where every minute detail has been considered and preordained. And busy hands find no idle time and no useless labour. This is our day of grace, our season of discipline, our scene of holy acquirement, where we are moulded and matured ; and babes, young men, and fathers—blade,

and ear, and full corn in the ear—nature, grace, and glory—are but the ascending stairs of heavenly experience, the path of the just as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

To men in our honourable calling, studies must never be suspended, prayers must never cease, work is never done. If our heart be in it, it cannot be. If our God be in it, it will not be. If our brother's salvation be in it, it must not be. 'In season and out of season' the ministry of reconciliation should and will go on.


Ours, remember, is 'the ministry of reconciliation;' not the making of reconciliation, but still the ministry of it. And if our teaching leaves men in their alienation and makes no protest, encourages men in their rebellion and makes no alarm in the sinner's soul, it is not a faithful *ministry*. We must not hope to be popu-

lar with the godless and at the same time faithful to God. If we antagonise Satan, we may look for his enmity and cunning craftiness to be raised against us and our ministry. 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,' is a Christian axiom which we must never forget. But 'the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable ;' and He who is the Prince of peace in the sense of the calm which His servants feel, has yet said, 'I came not to send peace, but a sword,' in respect of the forthcoming warfare.

And the work of the ministry will not grow easier, as the closing years of our Gospel dispensation are coming on. The first days were hard times, and true men, when they first unfurled the banner of the Cross, felt the shock of a strong current which bore down at once upon them. The cunning of the enemy made him resolutely active to crush Christianity in its

germ, and the thing grew under conditions which sorely tried the faith and the patience of the men who were confessors and martyrs for the truth of God. And 'the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.' 'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.' 'The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.' What then? 'The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom;' and 'I am set for the defence of the gospel.' The soldier's place of honour is in the field. His whole discipline contemplates his having to 'fight the good fight of faith.' The great tribulation will bring out the triumphs of faith.

Our ministry falls on a day and an age of grand opportunity. There is a stir in men's minds and a vigour in men's *movements which should rouse us all.* There is



a spirit of inquiry abroad—often hostile, and irreverent, and unreasonable in its demands and modes of procedure ; but men who think, even if they begin by thinking amiss, are men in the condition with which the gospel loves to deal. It fears no inquiry, it flinches from no sifting process. Shut it out, and it can only beat upon the closed doors till some chink may let it in ; but give it admission, and in the darkest mind, and in the dreariest life and the most desolate heart, its sweet ministry of grace, and love, and light begins. The leaven may seem lost in the three measures of meal, but it will ever assert its own presence, and prove its own defence. ‘Let no man’s heart fail him.’ We are on the side of right, on the side of truth, on the side of God.

But if it be honour to work, what a shame it must be to be slothful ! Suffer me to suggest that it is in this direction

that our main temptation lies. No man has so ready an excuse for being idle as he who, if he does his duty, will be overburdened with work. We know how ready the thought is, that we cannot be expected to do everything, and that no man has a right to demand what is above our strength. But who is the honest worker who will not say, 'I ought to have done far more?' And what is that ministry, be it ever so honourable before men, that in the Master's presence does not look meagre, and unworthy, and ill-done? If anything humbles a man, it is his work. The sluggard is anxious about himself, and if he may sleep on he is content. The self-confident man is looking at his neighbours; and because he is busier than other men, he grows conceited, and applauds himself. But the servant of Christ has a standard within him of holy principle and holy purpose, *and his own heart condemns him for sad*

shortcomings and defects. And 'God is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things;' and in the presence of God he can only confess how unworthy and unprofitable he must be.

We have a glorious vantage-ground for working in our position as the recognized ministers of our National Church. It is an honour that we are expected to be labouring for the glory of God and the good of souls. And even if the nation shall lay upon us burdens which we ought not to bear alone, yet the very claim betokens confidence. Our people are very practical people. They may care but little about talk, but they understand and appreciate work. Theories about our system may seem to prove that it must be bad; but let it be seen in action, and the people will leave the objectors and gather round us when they know, see, feel, that we are busy for their good.

But it must be with our own work—the work of the ministry—that we are engaged. We are not to be a superior order of police, not to be relieving officers of a holier grade, not lecturers on the subjects of the day, not educational agents even upon secular and social subjects. All these things will have our attention and our help. But our work is about the souls of men, is about the message of salvation to be delivered in the name of Christ, is about the glory and the government and the truth of God. The cry of the Early Church must be our appeal still : ‘ It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables ; ’ ‘ But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’

While, however, we thus keep to our own sphere, we must equally remember that it is not ours only. The work of the ministry should also stir up the working of other *men*. No small part of our labour is to be

in selecting workers and suggesting work. A large amount of the unhealthiness in our ecclesiastical body will disappear when people are at work. 'In all labour there is profit,' and there is health and harmony in active and concerted effort after a right and righteous thing.

But work must not ignore the ministry. There is no practical wisdom in the man who does not say, 'I magnify mine office.' There must be order and law in every well-regulated enterprise. The Church of Christ is an organized body, a disciplined army, a community in which there is government, authority, administration. The work without the ministry may run in an opposite direction from that of the ministry without work; but there is danger from both extremes. The true shepherd goes before the sheep. The wise teacher stands officially, intellectually, and experimentally above his hearers. The leaders of the Lord's hosts are

warriors also themselves, and the battle is of the whole army in all places of the field.

Let all true men beware of jealousy. Above all things, let us get rid of feuds amongst the brethren, when an enemy is at our gates. Ours is only a ministry. 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth.' 'Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.' (Rom. xiv. 4, 10.)

Workers who know the strain of work, the need of work, the anxiety of work, should endeavour to respect and support one another. No compromise, no cowardice, about truth; and yet a hearty sympathy when men meet upon ground already cleared, stand on areas already won, and labour on to do all the good they can.


And workers who understand the *discouragements in work*, must come together

for prayer. The Minister goes back to his Master, asking for instructions, for help, for blessing, when the real perplexities come on. The worker looks at the materials lying round, and the plan laid down for his direction ; and these are his meditations. There is nothing in the material, nothing in the machinery, nothing in the muscle of the worker's arm, that singly or unitedly can bring about the great effect. But God in all, God over all—and all for the glory of His Holy Name—this is the explanation that out of the weak, and even against the strong, mighty effects are sure to follow, and the work of the ministry proves to be a labour of love, an act of faith, and a thing of power.

IV.

HOLINESS.

THE subject of holiness must ever be interesting among men who have to deal with holy things. 'Holiness becometh God's house for ever.' Therefore God's ministers must value it. 'Be ye holy, for I am holy,' is the divine argument by which God establishes the fact that the Son must reflect the Father's character. Therefore God's ambassadors must make known this very essential element in the moral government of God's people. And 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' is the established fact and condition about the *power to enter or enjoy in the King's pre-*



sence. Therefore they who are the best friends of man are bound to 'declare the whole counsel of God,' so that there may be no mistake.

And the subject is far higher than the common standard which men who call themselves Christians appear to set up. For instance, it means far more than *respectability*. It is not needful now for us to inquire about the cause ; but probably we are all very sensible of the fact that in our congregations and amongst the mass of men who profess Christ, the idea of respectability has deeply rooted itself in the mind. The orderly and well-conducted households, the high and honourable character in the world from probity, truth, high-minded integrity ; the grave, and reverent, and conscientious attention to duty in the house of God ; the bold, honest, thorough attachment to the Book, and truth, and day of God ;—all these things

are marked by us with thankfulness, as the outcome of the solid teaching which English Churchmen get both from the sermons and the services of our Scriptural Church. But all these things may exist, and yet holiness may neither be understood nor reached. There may be morality of this kind when there is no heart religion; for the secondary effects of God's Word are to produce a manly character, even when the real results of a devoted obedience to God, for His own sake alone, may not appear.

It means also more than we sometimes attach to the idea even of *spirituality*. There is an atmosphere of the emotional which gathers round the profession of service before the God of love. Indeed, the service of the heart, of the affections, must be the first, last, and continuous service which sinners saved by grace are to offer to their heavenly Master. But to talk about spiritual *subjects, to have fellowship with spiritual*

persons, to know how to analyse, explain, and teach spiritual feelings and experiences, may all come short of the level on which the real life and walk of a Christian are to be. Real spirituality, in which a man's soul is his main concern, in which a man's fellowship with the Spirit is thankfully maintained—this is but another explanation that the man is alive towards God. And the Christian minister who is himself alive will be thrilled to the centre of his being, as these evidences of the Holy Ghost's action come before him. But this is a sensational age. There are many things at work, in very different directions, which tend to a religion of feeling only. There may be a false fervour gendered by superstition. There may be an unhealthy excitement, fed by stimulants, formed out of hysteria, a thing of the fancy, or of love of display, or of the pride of a man's own opinion. We must not be deceived or dis-

couraged by such things ; but it is part of our duty to be calm and cool in our estimate of men and things. To steady men's minds in a day of unhealthy excitement, is as much our calling as to stir them in a time of torpor and sloth of soul. Our very position, and education, and influence upon all ranks of men, which come because we are ministers of parishes as well as of congregations, should keep us from extremes, hold us up amidst clamour of every kind, and make us move forward and point onward, so that we and all whom we may guide, shall go from strength to strength and from grace to grace, 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God.'

This, then, is our subject ; how we are to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.'

HOLINESS IS NOT SINLESSNESS.

'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son



cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' 'There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good.' To understand this, we must keep in memory a twofold account of sin. 'Sin is the transgression of the law,' and to live in distinct violation of God's law is not consistent with holiness. But 'to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin,' (Jam. iv. 17.) This is the sin of omission, and what man thinks to be sufficient may be found most insufficient before God. 'This is the way, walk ye in it,' is God's commandment; and 'when ye turn to the right hand, or when ye turn to the left,' it is a transgression which He must forbid. But he who walks in the way of God's commandments will find that both as to knowledge and pursuit of lawful things, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and

more unto the perfect day.' But on the other hand,—Holiness is not lawlessness. The servant of God is not left to the promptings of his own love as to the way in which he is to please His Master. We are not to do that which is right in our own eyes. The rule of life is as much from God, as the spring of life. And the faithful servant will ever ask, 'What is written in the law?' What saith the Lord? And so it is that, amid all the fluctuations of human opinion, and through the changeful appearances of human life—one great code is everywhere and always to guide and govern man. It is law by the Royal Statute—law after the Heavenly wisdom—law throughout every department both of public and private life. Holiness is 'doing the will of God from the heart.' It is what Paul prayed for: 'I pray God that your whole spirit, *and* soul, and body be preserved blame-

less unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (1 Thess. v. 23.)

HOLINESS IS HARMONY WITH GOD.

Harmony of Feeling.—'We love Him because He first loved us.' The love of admiration, when the heart feels how holy, how great, how wise, how true the Lord is. The love of adoration, when the soul knows what honour and what happiness are to be found in the worship which opens all our powers, and elevates our own pleasures. The love of attachment, when the thought has wandered with tired wing from every hiding-place, and at last finds all it needs, and more than all it hoped, in the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. To cultivate this feeling, and to advance in this holiness, there come in all the holy privileges of meditation upon God's perfections, and a familiar access, through Christ, into His pre-

sence. It bids us be much alone with God. It tells us to be watchful after God, see Him in all He has made and said, 'to know the love of God which passeth knowledge.'

It is also *harmony of purpose*. The sinful man has a selfish, a worldly, an isolated purpose. That is because he is short-sighted, narrow-minded, proud-hearted. The saintly man has had his will enlarged, uplifted, illuminated; and so he says, 'Not my will, but thine be done.' To deepen this principle, there comes in the study of God's ways. Under the Holy Ghost's direction, a man finds out that 'the ways of transgressors is hard'—and that 'all things work together for good to them that love God.' He learns to rectify his own observations, till he looks at things not as they appear from this under side of earth, but as they will *one day be seen from the steps of God's throne in heaven*. So there comes out a

consciousness of divine wisdom. Then comes the moulding of thought, the blending of design, the parallelism of will, the harmony of purpose; and the Father's honour, and cause, and people, and kingdom, become the things that the child most seeks.

It is *harmony of thought*. In the mind of the natural man, the things of earth, the opinions of man, and the habits of the world, have first place. His mental structures are mainly out of the materials which creaturehood has found. His very ideas of heaven are but an enlargement and exaggeration of his experience on earth. But grace lifts a man's thought into nobler contemplation. The prayer of St. Paul may well teach us that : 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.' Eph.

17, 18. The taste for higher subjects, an interest in a nobler service, a flight for a wider survey of all God's grander dominions—these things are made part and parcel of the character of the men who are taught of God. Holiness, therefore, is a partaking of the divine nature. What our Lord Himself has revealed about us when He said, 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.'

The pursuit of holiness brings us to an inquiry as to what we are. It will not blind our eyes to our own infirmity. It will show how 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit.' It will keep us ever in a modest humility, and yet in an honourable courage against Satan and all sin. It will come like the refiner's fire, not ignoring the dross but detaching it. It will explain that the holiness of earth is not expected *to be the holiness* which will be in heaven';

yet it is the purity of the household of faith, and not the pollution of the synagogue of Satan, nor the perfection of the city of bliss. The atmosphere of evil which surrounds a man, and the body of infirmity which burdens a man, will and must cause that the harmony from heart, or mind, or will, shall not give out the perfect and purest response to the touch of God's grace and love. But the discord is heard no longer, the jarring notes have ceased, the lyre restrung and retuned will one day blend in the sweet music which trembles and thrills round the throne of God.

Holiness is response to law. There may be a sullen submission, and a silent acquiescence, as when a man dares not resist because he is weak, and will not argue because he is ignorant. The obedience which comes out from fear, and the service which is rendered unto force, is not that

which holiness means to teach. And there may be a haphazard doing right, which sees no reason and can give no reason why the doing might not be equally right if it had taken some other form. 'Reasonable service' is what the righteous God expects from responsible servants ; and the instinct of man is to say, ' The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.' And this is not a mere admission, but it must also be a response. This command is a challenge, and the holy man of God answers at once to its appeal. And so it is that holiness implies love for God's word. The Christian finds study for a lifetime, and direction for a life, in the revelation which God has given. The letter and spirit of every Divine requirement will be prayerfully considered, and the outcome will be confession, ' Thy commandments are exceeding broad.' Motives will be carefully


traced back to their origin in grace, and forward to their maturity in act, and habit, and character, as the discipline of life goes on. And the varied portraitures, as in a gallery of the saints, will be studied as to every feature and lineament, attitude and bearing, by which the sons of God have been conspicuous through all the ages, and in all the development of the people of the Most High.

Holiness is from communion with the Holy Ghost. The believer's body is His temple, and it is purified by His indwelling. 'Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' The obedience to which St. Peter has pointed is described as 'through sanctification of the spirit.' If, therefore, the person and work of God the Holy Ghost be little understood, or systematically ignored, or only seldom brought out in the life and teaching of a Christian man, we need not wonder that the devo-

tion is feeble and intermittent, and that its pleasures are small and few. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour and our strength. We sit with Him in heavenly places by the faith which realizes Him at the right hand of God. But this is the dispensation of the Spirit. The Comforter has come, and He has not yet gone away. 'Because ye are sons, God has shed abroad the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' The graces of Christian life are all 'the fruits of the Spirit,' and 'if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.'

Holiness must be a very practical expression in the man who lives in Christ and for the glory of God.

Holiness in thought will form a very conspicuous branch in this great subject. And the discovery of selfish thought may *well keep the best man humble, and busy*



in clearing the ground of his own heart from these ill-growing weeds.

Holiness in motive must also be kneaded into every right service which we can render to a heart-searching God ; and when we trace things to their source, how often must we deplore that it was fear or favour of man which modified and gave a turn to the deeds and the labour which the world will applaud as good.

Then, in public and private life, in domestic and ministerial relations, what unreality and inconsistency may be detected in the course of every one of us all before God. It is our duty, appertaining to our office, and pressing upon our conscience, to elevate the law, and raise the standard of holy life and conduct. The scepticism, the formalism, the luxuriousness, the levity of the times, have brought down religion too often into the lower conditions of that which is external

and uninfluential on the manners of men. And we are liable to be carried away ourselves by the strong currents which have set in against the holy and the high-minded deportment that our religion ought to prompt. We must be more than mere leaders without being guides. We must move, but not from a pressure behind us, but by an impulse and an instinct within us. Followers of the holy Jesus, champions of His holy teaching and requirements, we must be daring to resist the devil, and meaning to be more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Yet the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ are not to be ascetics, an order who live in an atmosphere which the common people cannot expect to breathe. We are not to stand aloof and say, 'Stand by, for I am holier than these.' The problem of holy life is to be solved in the common *trans-actions of an active life*. We must never

sanction the opinion that a layman may live without rebuke in a manner which no clergyman would be allowed to follow. The morality of the Church applies to every order and degree of men amongst us. And the general advance in purity cannot be made by pushing some men into a saintly, and leaving other men in a fleshly living.

These are some practical suggestions which, as brethren in the common ministry, we may lay to heart.

1. Let us see that our whole character is of a piece. Some grace may have been given, by which, in some department of Christian experience, we may have been found faithful. We must not take credit for that, and cease to be vigilant in some other part of our character in which blemishes may be found. Taking our stand on our highest attainments, we must bring up every other faculty of our soul to this

upper level. In fighting the enemy at one gate, we must see that some open door does not after all admit him into the citadel of the soul. Armed at all points, prayerful under all circumstances. 'See that ye walk circumspectly.'

2. We must learn the habit of laying our whole being open under the eye of God. There is communion with Him, other than praise and prayer, other than hearing from Him by His word, or speaking to Him with our tongue. It is a conscious unveiling our very hearts in His presence. At such a time a man attempts to conceal nothing, to deny nothing, to excuse nothing. It is in purpose what the Psalmist put in words, 'Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.' 'All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.'

3. *We shall* do well to walk as if the

eyes of the holiest members of our flock were on us night and day. I do not suggest that the comment of man should keep us from an evil course. But, for practical purposes, this may be a useful mode of determining with our souls whether any given course is lawful or expedient. If I can do it in secret, if I care little what my family may think, should I like to submit this spirit, or temper, or transaction to the men and women of my own parish or congregation with whom I wish to stand well?

3. We must carry about with us the unction from the Holy One which accords with our holy calling. We are men living for the salvation and edification of human souls. We are ambassadors for Christ in a world that has openly declared in many ways, 'We will not have this man to reign over us;' and it is cowardice and betrayal of trust, if we do not so stand out before

the world, that all men know that we are on the side of Christ. We are instructors of the people, to whom the nation has committed a precious portion of its own living family to be guided, taught, and trained aright. Who shall deem us to be worthy of this confidence, unless we prove ourselves to be so by our own consistent life and labour of Christian love?

4. We must remember the great account which we must one day give, of the people committed to our charge. That will be sad witness against us, if some lost soul shall say — there was the testimony of the lip, and the formal services of the sanctuary ; but I did not believe that minister thought his own words true, because he was so listless in private, so silent under opposition, so little able to justify what he required from his people, by what he did himself.

Even careless men will respect our holi-

ness. They cannot in their heart be glad to see a minister of Christ demean himself by a conformity with the world of the ungodly. If we would be happy in our work, honourable in our repute, influential in our position, we must be holy men of God. Unreality is always weak and wretched, but when it appears amongst men who ought to be in earnest, because danger and death are so real—Christ and His salvation are so true—it takes its most degrading and disgusting form. So, above all other claims, and before all other considerations, our inquiry about ourselves, in the secrets of our own soul-life must be—what do I know, what do I enjoy, what do I exhibit in regard to that which will mark all that is perfect in heaven, ‘Holiness unto the Lord?’

V.

UNION.

BEFORE we can fully understand the subject of Christian union, we must have clear ideas on the subject of Christian separation. Because much mistake and disappointment have come from giving to His nominal Church the promises which belong only to the real living disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Ye are all one in Christ Jesus ;' but between those who are practically without Christ, and those who are actually in Him, no spiritual communion can exist. The true Christians come out and are separate from the multitude of *them that do not accept Christ*. The body

consists of its living members—and the secret of its union really is its life. We talk of dissolution as the consequence and evidence of death.

Now this distinct separation of the real from the apparent—of the Church from the world—of the spiritual from the carnal—is much to be kept in mind. Not in pride, not for purposes of self-glorying—but from an honest assertion of a plain fact, we are required to keep the distinction drawn by an apostle, very clear and very prominent, specially in a day like this. ‘What communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God.’ (2 Cor. vi. 14, &c.) The elements to be combined must be homogeneous, of the one body; and all these elements are to be not in contact

merely, but in combination—an organic mass, ‘many members, yet but one body.’ ‘And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.’ ‘Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.’

But there may be unity when there need not be uniformity—when there is not, what there ought to be, union. Combined muscular action in the physical body is the condition of health; but the want of it is often a feature in disease. We see it in paralysis, in the drunkard’s stagger. And the purpose of my address to-day is, not only that we may live, but live together—have feeling, but also sympathy—work, and work in harmony—‘striving together for the faith once delivered unto the saints.’

I hold that as Christian brethren we have no right to look for *union on senti-*

ment. Experiences vary, and attainments differ, and no man was meant to be a model for other men. The family life has no uniformity of feature or expression. Individuality, variety, are to be found in all the departments of God's great kingdom of nature, and providence, and grace. It is proof of the divine originality, that He never copies Himself. Amongst Christians, this brings out some of the very happiest and holiest outworking of the life and labour of love. Mutual consideration, mutual concession, mutual confidence, mutual co-operation, are some of the many ways in which this great principle takes effect. You can no more compel sentiments than you can compel sensations. Put pressure upon the heart, and you disturb all the body. It is here that we need to exercise the charity which beareth and believeth all things. Aim at union which results, when brother sits by the side of

brother, looking at things as they appear from the common point of view : feeling not only for a man which may be only pity, or as a man which may be only selfishness, but with a man which is and will be acknowledged to be goodness, generosity, and love.

I further conceive that as freemen in Christ, we must not insist upon identity of opinion in all matters which we either hold or teach. There is a broad platform of revealed truth, on which all true men must stand. I expect no practical harmony from men who have no truth in common. But there is a large outlying field of deductions, and inferences, and even bold inquiry, over which it is wise to allow free thought to have free range. We are privileged in our own Scriptural Church to have wise and accurate guidance in these matters. Our Scriptural articles are *'for the avoiding of diversities of opinions,*

and for the establishing of consent touching true religion.' We may all agree, 'in the true, usual, literal meaning of the said articles,' and so as within a great ecclesiastical breakwater, we may find quietness and peace. My meaning is that we should not harass, and suspect, and antagonize one another upon secondary and subordinate questions. Even though we do not agree, say upon the meaning of a passage in God's word, or upon the scriptural warrant for some theological system, or upon the comparative importance of this or that doctrine, for the purpose of the faith and of the life, yet may we live as brethren, giving the machinery of our individual thought a full and fair action without heat and friction. The facts, the fundamental doctrines, the saving truths are within holy ground; and there no speculation must enter, for God's own authority has settled what we are to hold

and teach. Narrow we must be in this matter, because the rock on which all rests has distinct isolation and elevation in reference to the shifting sand. The dove may wander far, but it must come home to the ark at last.

But ours must be the union of determined men. We make no concession, we accept no compromise, because the honour of Christ, the maintenance of the truth of God, the spiritual heritage of our fellow-men, are things committed to our charge. We have only one account to give concerning sin—whether in high or in low places—however common and convenient, palatable or profitable, it may have become. We have only one offer to make concerning salvation—that it is by grace, by blood, by faith ; and all men, however high above us in intellect, or station, or worldly power, must be told the truth, not as being from us, but from God, who bids

us speak. We have only one standard to set for human life and conduct, that God is to be glorified, that flesh is to be crucified, that the world is to be forsaken, if it comes into collision with Christ. .

And we must all hold together in this our testimony. Some are very bold spirits amongst men, brave men who cannot be hid, and will not be ignored. Let not weaker men of peace join in the world's condemnation of the great champions for Christ. Some of us are men of retirement, who can plead with God, and commune with lovers of truth ; but who shrink from the field of controversy and the strife of tongues. Let not the belted warrior say that such men stay by the stuff, and reap the spoil. The danger may make every man into a warrior, and the difficulties may turn every warrior into a man to trust neither in sword nor spear. But the host must not become disorganized. And dis-

cipline, brotherly spirit, the moving and moving together of the mass, was never more needed than now.


‘If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thyself.’

There is a wonderful law in nature which may illustrate the law of union under grace. It is the law of crystallization. There is need of some base on which the crystals range themselves. Union with Christ is absolutely essential to real union with Christians. It is the mysterious force of His love which moves ours. Our own rising to Him in light and love lifts us up out of the region of narrow personalities, and souls that meet at the throne of grace must mingle and meet under the nearer and *the purer conditions* of life and godliness.

There is union also by reason of the common burden of responsibility which exists upon us together. While each man bears his own burden, and the idea is only that of individual responsibility, I can understand that men may abide apart. But look at a dozen men lifting some beam into its place. How they draw together as the strain grows greater. So, if we, as ministers of Christ, come to understand that the great cause of truth and Christ is committed to our keeping—that, besides our separate action on individual souls, there is also the corporate responsibility towards the whole body, head and members—then the wider thought of ‘bearing one another’s burdens’ will come in. The great spirit of craftship, of brotherhood, must extend amongst us. The great temple is being prepared, and all who have been employed about it have an interest, and derive an honour, from helping the great Architect in


this His greatest work. I feel that no clergyman should need an introduction to another. What unites them is something that is not severed by social distinctions, or ecclesiastical dignity, or educational differences. These are only the very shifting things of the outer world, out of which, in the very nature of things, growths may seem to be separate, and divergent things. But the plants of grace have their union with the root which is not seen. And like the palm-tree of the desert, their mysterious drawing is from the deep springs of hidden grace, down to which the whole vigour of the life is directed to make the tap-root pierce.

There is union also by reason of a common hope. 'A multitude whom no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues,' 'press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;' and as they



gather from the thousand paths in the world-wide pilgrimage, we must expect them to come together. And so, this subject of union becomes more and more apposite as the time of the end draws near. The enemy has great wrath, and that must drive men together. But the king has a great gathering, and so men are drawn together. And just as at the close of his life, a man would gather his family round to share his blessing, and to cement their love ; so as the time draws near when the day of salvation is to close, men will be fired by a new zeal, and an intenser interest, and the Church of Christ, standing apart, yet standing together, will illustrate that beautiful conception of the Song of Songs : ' Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.'

Suffer me to indicate some of the conditions under which this union may be formed and nurtured amongst us.



First, union will come out of division. Men contend because they crowd towards some one object, or jostle one another in the ill-regulated crowd of labourers who do not know their posts. We cannot all do all things ; and whenever we see ability, and zeal, and energy, and prayerfulness, and power, and success, the feeling should be, not of envy, not of comparison between ourselves and some more gifted brother, but of gratitude, and hearty welcome, and cordial encouragement, and clear-sighted intelligence, that God has fitted the worker for his work. It is needful that we should bear all this in mind, because, from the force of circumstances, out of a state of Church policy which we did not create, various duties, all kinds of claims rest upon the individual man, whose whole powers of body and of mind are considered to be at the disposal of the whole parish. The *division* of labour will show different ways

in which good work can be done ; and it is but a neighbour's part and pleasure, to look at the spiritual husbandry under other hands, and experience, sympathy, union will grow out of such a state of things. The Church requires the ministry of all the talents ; and no one can say what power God can put even into an instrument of little promise, till the man is tried, and used, and encouraged to throw all his force and fervour into the work which has been given him to do.

Secondly, *union comes from keeping the approachable part of our nature outermost.*

Many a man has been expelled by a stern exterior. It may be only modesty, but it has often been mistaken for pride. We may think we are only cautious, but another may think us cold. Attractiveness will not follow a manifest attempt to please. But we ought to be natural—as genial in manner as we are in feeling—willing to be

first to make advance, because we are friendly and like to multiply our friends. Aged men should have no wish to humble younger men. And the younger brethren, even if they seem to have to deal with a new generation, may well bear in mind that human nature is much the same in all ages, and the man who has worked for many years in the Lord's vineyard must have got some experience, as to the seasons, the processes, and the available resources under which the work of God goes on. The Christian believes in the power of character, more than of countenance ; but there is strange fascination about the looks, and the manner, and the words of some men, by which we see others group round as of very necessity, and make the kindly man the central man, who unites and binds together those who but for him might never have become one. 'He that hath friends, *must show himself friendly,*'—not only be,

but appear to be, approachable by other men who come and ask his love.

Thirdly, *Union comes from remembering what the Saviour and even the world expect.*

Few things have misrepresented Christianity, as the divisions of Christian men. We may be able to account for much of the warmth from the fact that earnest men contend for what they believe to affect the honour of the Saviour and the salvation of the souls of men. And we cannot be too true to these great interests of our faith. But there is light which lightens and does not scorch. There is a zeal according to knowledge, which also proves itself to be according to love. 'See how these Christians love one another,' is a kind of evidence in this day which the crowning miracle was in our Lord's day : 'To the poor the Gospel is preached.' The Saviour's prayer was, that they who loved Him might be all one ; and that is a touching picture given us

of the old disciple whom Jesus loved, that his latest teaching was, 'Beloved, let us love one another.' Men see the mark of the family in the affections of the child, and they believe in a religion which thus fathers itself.

There are many worldly axioms which go to prove that 'Union is strength.' But there is a Bible maxim out of which much instruction may be drawn : 'Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me ; and he shall make peace with me.' Isa. xxvii. 5. It is a special privilege of the weak. The feeblest may become the first links in a lasting bond, by which the strongest may apply their strength. The union between the soul and God is that we do not resist or defy His strength ; but take hold of it in a humble, trustful spirit. And if men would coalesce with those nearest to them, begin *to acquiesce* in points on which teachable

men are willing to agree, we should be surprised at the rapidity with which the nucleus of concord would grow.

Let a man look at the discord, and he may persuade him that the confusion cannot be changed. The prophets of failure hasten the fulfilment of their own forebodings. But let a man believe in the vitality of faith—believe that one of the fruits of the Spirit is love—believe that order and harmony will evolve even out of the discordant elements of human hearts if the spirit of wisdom and of love be cultivated, and he will work with a will for charity ; and the saying of St. James will be found to have a deep fund of wisdom in it, ‘The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.’ The fruit is a seed sown by the peace-makers, and settling in quiet hours of thought and feeling, and the harvest of a rich return will come one day.

I do not expect that the Church of Christ will find the last days to be days of rest or ease. 'Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse;' and the Word of God has taught us to expect 'the great tribulation.' But in Christ it will have peace; and the 'unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' explains the inner and the outer principles by which the Church is one.

It is not our purpose to examine on whom the blame of our unhappy divisions must rest. 'All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.' It is useless to ignore facts, or forget results in 'a house divided against itself.' There is no wisdom in covering up unclosed wounds; and the men of the tenderest charity may be men of the most uncompromising faithfulness. But let it be known that our very contentions are in the interest of peace, and that if we '*withstand* a man to his face, because he

is to be blamed,' it is only that we may take him closer to our heart when he has returned to the faith which he is pledged to defend. In regard to union, therefore, there must be a holy conviction that we hold, and can maintain, the truth as it is in Jesus. This will send us to our knees, to our Bibles, to our communings with our heart, and communion with our God. And out of all that will grow a holy calmness which can look friend or foe fully in the face, and say, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.' Weak men run into parties, and are rallied by party cries. But strong men turn in upon their individual consciousness to the absolute certainty of the word and truth of God, and say, 'I know in whom I have believed.'

It is a glorious mission for a man that he has in any way been permitted to labour for peace. He has been gathering up the better and nobler parts of our

human nature, and disentangling the matted mass of opinions, faiths, feelings, which has so long been a reproach in the Church of Christ. He has been rallying here and there a little band of his scattered soldiers of the cross, who in their alarm were likely to mistake friend for foe; and as the companies come together, and the field is cleared, he sees that order, and harmony, and discipline, are still a part of the old system by which the Captain of our Salvation will yet lead us to victory.

There must be stirring times, in which champion men are ready for any shock against the host of God; but hurry, and heat, and hardness, are found in war, and victory often has brought to the conqueror sad remembrances of stern things said and done.

But lovers of peace have a less exciting life. Men feel their influence, but do not *speak of their presence*. The principle of

union is the great gravitation law which works without observation, but never without effect. 'Blessed are the peace-makers,' and if the effect of our conference has been that any has felt that electric thrill which magnetises the soul for Christ, then the happy consequence will be, that we shall have an influence of attraction wherever we may be, and our union will be only a part of that mighty coming together of hearts in the great family of the redeemed for which the world is waiting. It may be the 'assembly' call, because the last great fight is to begin against the accumulated forces of evil which Satan is to muster for a last assault. But it will also be the cry of the Master of assemblies, by which He shall summon all His followers to join His own triumphal entrance into the glorious inheritance which He has provided for all them that love His appearing.

Union in the fellowship of the Lord

Jesus Christ—union on the basis of God's own revealed word and truth—union under the influence of His Holy Ghost—union for the purpose of the Master's glory—union in love and labour—union in hope and joy—union in prayer, union in the bonds of the highest and holiest calling; this is worth living for on earth, and this will be the privilege, the perfection, the culmination of life in heaven.

Let us live, and labour, and strive for the union that is real, and lasting, and reasonable, amongst those who are

‘ONE IN CHRIST.’



